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SUBJECT The 7th Section of the Red Army General Staff

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ORIGIN

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EVALUATION OF SOURCE

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Most Recent **EVALUATION OF CONTENT**

1. General

The 7th Section of the Red Army General Staff was formed during the war at the initiative of the Chief Political Administration of the Red Army to handle matters not falling within the competence of the existing staff sections. Its primary tasks were the carrying out of political and psychological warfare against enemy troops in the field, and the implementation of Soviet political policy in occupied territories.

2. Organization and Personnel

- a. The "7-Sections" were added to the normal six sections of each major field headquarters ("Fronts" and Armies). Attached detachments were sent down to divisional headquarters from the 7-Sections of the army. Normally, there was no representation on corps staffs.
- b. At all levels, the 7-Sections worked closely with the Political and Special ("Smersh") Sections of their headquarters. Section personnel, both administrative and field, were considered to be "political workers" (ПОЛИТРАБОТНИКИ) and, in the case of officers, were generally graduates of higher military-political institutions, or of special courses given under the Chief Political Administration.
- c. In lower echelons, the basic 7-Section personnel were senior and junior "Instructors for Work among the Troops and Population of the Enemy" (ИНСТРУКТОРА ПО РАБОТЕ СРЕДИ ВОЙСК И НАСЕЛЕНИЯ ПРОТИВНИКА) and "Instructors for the Demoralization of Enemy Troops" (ИНСТРУКТОРА ПО РАЗМОЖЕНИЮ ВОЙСК ПРОТИВНИКА). A divisional 7-Section detachment generally consisted of two senior instructors and several junior instructors in each category. Depending on the tactical situation, additional instructors and other specialists were sent down from army headquarters.

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In February 1945, for example, when the SS Division "Wallonien" and elements of the French SS Division "Charlemagne" were committed on the Soviet 61st Army front, special psychological warfare units composed of French and Walloon Communists were attached to the 7-Section detachments of units facing these divisions. Equipped with loudspeakers and leaflet-shells, these special units were markedly successful in inducing the surrender or desertion of their compatriots.

- d. Army 7-Sections, in addition to their normal personnel, generally had an attached German or Austrian "anti-Fascist" whose job was to carry on "agitprop" among prisoners-of-war. The 61st Army's anti-Fascist was an Austrian named Aigner.
- e. During the Polish campaign, "Instructors for Polish Matters" were assigned to many field headquarters, especially to those with attached Polish units.

3. Work of 7-Sections at the Front

In combat, the work of the 7-Sections was of the following kinds:

a. Psychological warfare using loudspeakers and leaflet shells.

- (1) The Soviets used three types of loudspeakers under combat conditions. The largest, known as the LGU (МГУ or КОМУНАРА ГОБОПРОВАЯ УСТАНОВКА), had 5 loudspeakers and was mounted on a U.S. 2½-ton truck. The range was 800-3,000 meters. The LGU carried a crew of two officers and three soldiers and was attached to lower echelons from army 7-Sections. The CGU (ОГУ or ОКОННАЯ ГОБОПРОВАЯ УСТАНОВКА), or trench-loudspeaker, was a smaller apparatus with a two-man crew (one officer and one soldier), with a range not exceeding 800 meters. Hand loudspeakers for work at close quarters were also used. Pamphlets and other propaganda literature were scattered over enemy lines by a special mortar shell called the "agitatin".
- (2) In the Red Army's psychological warfare work great emphasis was, of course, placed on the Free Germany Committee and the League of German Officers and the role that they were to play in the future Germany. In addition to the Free German manifestoes, etc., slogans from Stalin's wartime speeches concerning Germany were basic to the work of the 7-Sections. The two slogans, "Our purpose is the annihilation of Fascism, not of the German people", and "Hitlers come and Hitlers go, but the German people remains" were the most widely distributed.

b. Briefing and returning to enemy-lines of deserter-volunteers.

- (1) In February 1945, orders came down to 7-Section field detachments to select reliable PWs and to send them back to the German lines with the mission of inducing their comrades to desert. As a result, ten percent of all prisoners and deserters were turned over to the 7-Sections for screening, briefing, and preparation for return to their own lines. The briefing, which rarely lasted more than two or three days, consisted in acquainting the prisoners with the extent of the Soviet and Allied advances, the work of the Free Germany Committees and the Anti-Fascist Front, and the Soviet war aims with respect to Germany. These selected PWs were especially well treated so that they could report to their comrades that, contrary to German stories of Russian barbarism, PWs were handled with kindness and humanity. Before being sent back, the prisoners were required to sign a promise to return on completion of their mission. It is estimated that not more than five percent ever returned. Safe-conduct passes were scattered over the German lines in large quantities and also given to the PW-volunteers. As a rule, however, they were not honored when their bearers were captured.

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- (2) In addition to preparing PW-volunteers, members of 7-Section detachments participated in regular PW interrogations. While 7-Section psychological warfare met with some success against non-Germans, it can be said to have had only a limited effectiveness against regular German units and practically none whatsoever against German SS formations, even in the last months of the war. Although German soldiers deserted in ever-increasing numbers after the start of the Red Army's final offensive in Poland in January 1945, it is not likely that they were greatly influenced into surrendering by Soviet propaganda warfare. For the individual German soldier, it was simply a matter of saving his life by surrendering rather than sacrificing it needlessly in the last weeks of a war already lost.

c. Work among civilian population

- (1) During the Polish campaign, 7-Sections, in addition to their military tasks, carried out extensive "agitprop" among the Polish population. This involved chiefly the distribution of Polish-language propaganda literature on the Soviet Union and the Red Army and similar leaflets on the Dublin Committee and the Union of Polish Patriots in Moscow. The 7-Section detachments also investigated complaints by civilians against Red Army personnel. Those found guilty, after investigation, of violating Stalin's order concerning treatment of the civilian population were turned over to courts-martial for trial. Although offenders were severely punished, cases of looting and pillaging were not infrequent and did much to vitiate 7-Section political activities in Poland.
- (2) In general, all matters of a civil affairs nature fell within the competence of 7-Section detachments. In these matters, as in all 7-Section work, there was always close cooperation with the Political and Special ("Smersh") Sections.

4. Work of 7-Sections in Occupied Territory

- a. In occupied Germany, the 7-Sections of the Red Army were responsible for rehabilitating the German governmental apparatus. Working through local Komendaturas, 7-Section personnel carried out denazification, selection of new administrative officials, and, in short, all phases of military government activity. Organization of political parties, unions, and other matters affecting the political, cultural, and economic life in the Soviet Zone were all within the competence of the 7th Section. Many German Communists who had served in the Red Army during the war as 7-Section instructors or "anti-Fascists" immediately took over responsible posts in the KPD, so that cooperation between the Soviet authorities and the Communist Party was very close. Later, selected ex-PWs from the Free Germany Committee and even members of the League of German Officers were placed in administrative positions. In cooperation with the KPD, intensive "agitprop" was carried on among the German population during the land reform period.
- b. 7-Section personnel also collected documents and evidence concerning atrocities, concentration camps, Nazi policy toward foreign labor conscripts, etc., which were turned over to Soviet war crimes commissions.

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The 7-Section participated, also, on an auxiliary basis, in the screening of Russian and other displaced persons repatriated from the western zones of occupation. In collaboration with LVD personnel, 7-Section detachments engaged in certain intelligence activities in the transient DP camps, such as interrogation of repatriates about order of battle in the British and American Zones.

5. Liquidation of the 7-Sections

The psychological warfare functions of the 7-Sections ended with the cessation of hostilities. Since they were primarily organized into tactical detachments with the field forces, their usefulness in civil affairs matters ceased with the establishment of regular military government. In July 1945, therefore, by order of the Chief Political Administration of the Red Army, all 7-Sections were deactivated and their personnel transferred to Political Sections or military government.

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